

学校编码: 10384

分类号\_\_\_\_\_密级\_\_\_\_\_

学号: 12320081152817

UDC \_\_\_\_\_

厦门大学

硕士学位论文

存在主义危机:  
从存在主义视角评析《达罗卫夫人》

Existential Crisis

--An Analysis of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* by Existentialism

刘璐

指导教师姓名: 李美华 教授

专业名称: 外国语言学及应用语言学

论文提交日期: 2011 年 5 月

论文答辩日期: 2011 年 月

学位授予日期: 2011 年 月

答辩委员会主席: \_\_\_\_\_

评阅人: \_\_\_\_\_

2011 年 5 月

## 厦门大学学位论文原创性声明

本人呈交的学位论文是本人在导师指导下,独立完成的研究成果。本人在论文写作中参考其他个人或集体已经发表的研究成果,均在文中以适当方式明确标明,并符合法律规范和《厦门大学研究生学术活动规范(试行)》。

另外,该学位论文为( )课题(组)的研究成果,获得( )课题(组)经费或实验室的资助,在( )实验室完成。(请在以上括号内填写课题或课题组负责人或实验室名称,未有此项声明内容的,可以不作特别声明。)

声明人(签名):

年 月 日

# 厦门大学学位论文著作权使用声明

本人同意厦门大学根据《中华人民共和国学位条例暂行实施办法》等规定保留和使用此学位论文，并向主管部门或其指定机构送交学位论文（包括纸质版和电子版），允许学位论文进入厦门大学图书馆及其数据库被查阅、借阅。本人同意厦门大学将学位论文加入全国博士、硕士学位论文共建单位数据库进行检索，将学位论文的标题和摘要汇编出版，采用影印、缩印或者其它方式合理复制学位论文。

本学位论文属于：

（        ） 1. 经厦门大学保密委员会审查核定的保密学位论文，  
于    年    月    日解密，解密后适用上述授权。

（        ） 2. 不保密，适用上述授权。

（请在以上相应括号内打“√”或填上相应内容。保密学位论文应是已经厦门大学保密委员会审定过的学位论文，未经厦门大学保密委员会审定的学位论文均为公开学位论文。此声明栏不填写的，默认为公开学位论文，均适用上述授权。）

声明人（签名）：

年    月    日

## Abstract

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, which is set in the background at the after-war period, Woolf creatively employs special writing techniques to depict the lives of Clarissa and Septimus who are from different social classes over a day with the purpose to indicate their inner existential crisis. The former is an upper-class housewife and the latter is a veteran who becomes mad after the First World War.

The novel reflects the mental attitudes and outlooks of English people after the First World War, reveals the feeling of anxiety, and alienation in the absurd world and indirectly reflects the changes in England at the after-war period. Though Clarissa and Septimus have never met and known each other, as a matter of fact, the two have something in common. Both of them are haunted by existential crisis, which is caused by sordid world after the war. Woolf intends to make Septimus the double of Clarissa. By creating the two parallel figures, she aims to show readers life and death, sanity and insanity.

Existentialism proposes that man is full of anxiety, in despair with no meaning in his life, and awareness of death, just helplessly struggling in the absurd world, until he makes decisive choice about his own future. It means that the world is absurd, and man tries making meaning in choice of himself, for which he should take all responsibility. The existential characteristics of the novel are shown in these aspects: the absurd men in an absurd world, the sense of alienation and anxiety, the responsibility of man, and the choice one makes to give the meaning of his life.

The death of Septimus reveals that as a man who is responsible for the universal as a whole, it's heroic for him to commit suicide, and awaken the absurd world by death. As for Clarissa, she gathers all her strength from the lines "fear no more, the heat of sun" and obtains the meaning of life by holding party. And finally, she is ready to tackle with the suffering of life and faces it bravely. No matter what choices one makes, life or death, both of them are the existential heroes, like Sisyphus in the myth, who, despite torturing to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of the mountain, devotes himself to the cause and achieves a sense of self-respect and enjoyment.

In the novel, Woolf applies unique narrative strategies. She chooses the clock Big Ben as a narrative clue; not only does it report the exact physical time, but also every single physical moment is filled with complex consciousness of various characters. At the same time, Woolf uses the stream of consciousness to achieve a new narrative structure: in it there's no distinction between dream and reality, past and present. The narration flows simultaneously from the conscious to the unconscious, from the memory to the actual moment to illuminate and reinforce the existential elements in the novel.

**Key words:** Existentialism; Hero; Crisis; *Mrs. Dalloway*

## 摘要

20 世纪，西方社会高度物化。社会表面上的稳定，安全，以及物质进步，都只是海市蜃楼。人与人之间产生了前所未有的危机感和疏离感，人人都承受着孤独和焦虑的煎熬。人们发现，自己的理性和智慧的哲学不再保证他能够满意地答复“人是什么”这个问题。世界大战后，社会失去了理性和信仰。作为一个典型的现代人，难免这一时代疾患。整个存在和人生就显得荒诞而不可理解，空虚而毫无意义了。

存在主义者认为，在荒诞的环境中，孤独的个人没有逃避的余地，唯一的出路就是反抗，肩负起自己的责任，做出选择给生命以定义。挺身反抗这种虚无和荒诞，才能证明自己的存在，把自身从无意义的深渊中拯救出来。加缪认为，这样反抗给人生以价值，贯穿着生存的始终。人的反抗虽无胜利的希望，但却表明人是不可征服的，因而人生的价值即在这反抗的过程本身而非其结果。加缪把这样的反抗者称为“荒诞的英雄”。加缪的《西绪福斯神话》中的西绪福斯就是一个荒诞的英雄。他在这种无望的努力过程中获得了存在的意义。

在弗吉尼亚·伍尔夫的小说《达罗卫夫人》中，人被抛进了荒诞的世界，无依无靠，不得不自己去做出选择，这就是人的自由——自我选择的自由。对这种自由，人无可逃避，必须承担。同样，焦虑也将人引入自由选择。存在主义者在一种极端危机的人生图景中看到了人的自由，强调人应自我选择，负起存在的责任，这虽然是黑暗世界中的一线微光，但有其积极的意义。两个主人公，克拉丽莎和赛菩提莫斯，虽未曾谋面，却颇有共性。与现实隔离的深深孤独感缠绕着他们。两人的心头都萦绕着“无须害怕”这几个字。这来自莎士比亚的剧本《辛白林》中的一句诗：“无须再怕骄阳酷暑也不畏惧肆虐寒冬”。这句诗是安慰人们不要害怕死亡，因为死亡能帮助人们摆脱人世的痛苦。而两人一直在思考这句诗则暗示了二人脑海中挥之不去的死亡阴影，也试图寻找面对死亡的勇气。克拉丽莎经过生死思辨，选择了勇敢地活下去，去迎接生命的挑战，给她的“存在”赋予意义，而赛菩提莫斯决然地选择自杀，以死来对荒诞世界进行抗争，给世人以警醒。

从叙事手法上，《达罗卫夫人》中意识流的表现方法使得作品中产生一种若

即若离的感官效果，反映出世界的无序和荒诞。同时，大本钟在小说中作为一条叙述线索，凸显出一种时间焦虑，引发对生命和时间的关注，以及对人存在的思考。

综上所述，《达罗卫夫人》这部小说具有存在主义的特征。伍尔夫在创作中，不是单纯在荒诞世界里书写无所事事，而是从绝望的世界中寻找希望。人在逆境中的自由选择，在重压下不向命运低头，保持优雅风度，体现出人的尊严。我们可以得到这样的结论：小说中的两大主人公，克拉丽莎和塞普提摩斯，虽然选择了不同的生命道路，但是他们都不失为存在主义危机下的英雄，或给人勇气，或给人警醒。

**关键词：**存在主义；英雄；危机；《达罗卫夫人》

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter One A General Survey of Existentialism</b>	7
1.1 The Emergence of Existentialism	7
1.2 The Rise and Development of Existentialism	8
1.3 Main Thoughts of Existentialists	9
<b>Chapter Two Virginia Woolf's Existential Thought</b>	14
2.1 Social and Cultural Background of Woolf's Era	14
2.2 Woolf's Attitude Towards World War I	16
2.3 Woolf's Meditation on Existence	17
<b>Chapter Three Existential Crisis Undergone by the Characters in <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i></b>	19
3.1 Absurdity	19
3.2 Alienation	24
3.3 Anxiety	29
3.4 Responsibility and Free Choice	34
<b>Chapter Four The Heroes under Existential Crisis</b>	39
4.1 The Myth of Sisyphus--a Rebellious Hero	40
4.2 Clarissa--a Brave Heroine to Embrace Life	42
4.3 Septimus--an Insane Hero to Commit Suicide	47
<b>Chapter Five Narrative Strategies: an Existential Design</b>	53
5.1 Big Ben as a Narrative Clue	53
5.2 Stream of Consciousness and Its Existential implication	56
<b>Conclusion</b>	61
<b>References</b>	63
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	66



# 目 录

引言.....	1
第一章 存在主义综述.....	7
1.1 存在主义产生的背景.....	7
1.2 存在主义的发展.....	8
1.3 存在主义的主要观点.....	9
第二章 弗吉尼亚·伍尔夫的存在主义意识.....	14
2.1 伍尔夫时代的社会背景和文化背景.....	14
2.2 伍尔夫对第一次世界大战的态度.....	16
2.3 伍尔夫对存在的思索.....	17
第三章 《达罗卫夫人》中的存在主义危机.....	19
3.1 荒诞.....	19
3.2 疏离.....	24
3.3 焦虑.....	29
3.4 责任和自由选择.....	34
第四章 存在主义危机下的英雄们.....	39
4.1 西西弗斯的神话—反抗的英雄.....	40
4.2 克拉丽莎—直面生活的女勇士.....	42
4.3 赛菩提莫斯—殉道的疯癫英雄.....	47
第五章 叙事策略：突显存在主义主题.....	53
5.1 大本钟：叙事线索.....	53
5.2 意识流手法及其存在主义内涵.....	56
结语.....	61
参考文献.....	63
致谢.....	66

## Introduction

Virginia Stephen Woolf (1882-1941), the English novelist, critic, and essayist, is one of the representative writers in England during the period between the two World Wars. In her lifetime, she responded to a world in which faith was collapsing under the stresses of changing knowledge, the civilized savagery of war, and new manners and morals. Unsatisfied with the novel based on familiar, factual, and external details, with her sensitive, poetic awareness, Virginia Woolf contrived to create a new literary form which is described as impressionistic, more personal and internal by following the experimental clues. Her brilliant use of stream of consciousness skills in fiction and charming poetic temperament make Woolf an immortal name in the history of British literature. In her life, she totally finished nine novels; they are *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1938) and *Between the Acts* (1941).

Woolf's works offer a unique, early twentieth-century perspective on such topics as sexuality, feminism, life and death, madness and sanity, and the disintegration of society. Through her innovative works, she questioned both the nature of reality and the significance of the individual human being in an alienating and dehumanizing world. As a forerunner of stream-of-consciousness writing, Woolf prefers to explore the inner thoughts and feelings of her characters, rather than the dramatic action. At the same time, her novels do not limit themselves to a single consciousness, but move from character to character, using interior monologues to present each person's differing responses, often to the same event. Her specific contribution to the art of fiction is the representation of multiple consciousnesses hovering around a common center.

In her opinion, the writer should "be rid of realism, to penetrate without help into the regions beneath it" (Liu Bingshan, 2002: 496). She shifted the focus of novel from the outside world to people's inner mind. She did her best to "portray the inner life, bringing to attention the workings of the mind, which is often irrational, mysterious,

subconscious, and fluid” (Chang Yaixin, 2006: 384). Meanwhile, she was fascinated with time--both as a sequence of moments and in terms of years and centuries--and with the differences between external and internal time. It is often evident in the structure of her novels. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) occurs within the consciousness of several people during the course of one day.

David Daiches, a Scottish literary historian and literary critic, considers Woolf as one of the half-dozen novelists of her generation, whom the world will not easily let die, and when writing on *Virginia Woolf*, he asserted, “There can be little question that she was the greatest woman novelist of her time, though she herself would have objected to the separation of her sex implied in such a judgment.” (Daiches, 1942: 2)

Virginia Woolf is such a distinctive writer that critical attention towards her has never been diminished and academic research never been suspended. The study on Woolf has been extended in almost every aspect abroad or at home.

Virginia Woolf’s writings have always won great acclaim of the discriminating readers, however, her work has suffered, as has that of many other major authors, periods of neglect by the literary establishment. It was difficult to find copies of her books during the 1950s and 1960s, and they were rarely included on syllabuses for literature classes. However, even before 1972, when her nephew Quentin Bell’s bestselling biography introduced her to a larger public, there were signs of quickening of scholarly interest.

Nonetheless, her novels are in print now, in a variety of editions, often with introductions in homage by today’s writers. They have been translated into more than fifty languages. Her reviews, essays, and short stories have been collected. Fragments of unpublished manuscripts have been pieced together and published, giving general readers access to valuable material such as Woolf’s autobiographical writing, edited by Jeanne Schulkind in the collection *Moments of Being* (1976). And then there is the vast delight of the many volumes of letters and diaries, all scrupulously edited, copiously footnoted, and indexed. Even her reading notes are being published.

Woolf’s novels are valued by many scholars of the modernist period more for their aesthetic experimentation than the way in which they put more weight on the

important social and political issues. In the few sentences John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury devote to Woolf in their survey of canonical Modernism, her novels are described as “exploration[s] both of the aesthetic of consciousness and the aesthetics of art” characterized by “a kind of joyous artistic freedom” to focus on “form” (Fletcher, 1978: 408-09). Beyond an interest in formalist issues, comparisons between Woolf and her Modernist contemporaries--T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, H.D., Ezra Pound and others--have never been extensively drawn. One significant reason for this oversight is the fact that Woolf, living and writing in Bloomsbury, never embraced existence in the wandering, expatriate, “starving artist” way that other Modernists did. Geographical wanderings, critics insist, produced an added dimension to the works of the High Modernist canon noticeably absent from Woolf's life and work.

About the study of Woolf's life, scholars not only study Woolf's own life, and life of her family, but also her illness which is another area that attracts critical attention. From 1996 to 1999 studies were made more about the relationship between Woolf's illness and her creation. Meanwhile, social and historical studies have been focused on the Great War, the sentimentality of people in the war time and the significant influences upon Woolf's innovation of writing.

Ever since its publication, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), is subject to both complimentary and derogatory criticism. With her novel, Woolf takes the reader on a single day's journey through perceptions of various characters. Clearly influenced by James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Woolf's “single-day novel” begins with the preparations for Clarissa Dalloway's party and dutifully ends with all the characters gathered at the party. *Mrs. Dalloway* interrogates many significant Modernist issues: the impact of technology on daily life, the impact of World War I on the collective psyche, the value of institutions such as marriage, the intricacies of emotional commitments, and the anxiety produced by alienation of people from one another. While writing this novel Woolf fully realized one of her most acclaimed writing techniques--her “tunneling process”, which allows her to portray the exterior of a character and then

to move inside the character's mind and emotions. This narrative force brings psychological depth to each character.

Critics of this novel, both within and outside China, approach the novel from many different perspectives. Literature on *Mrs. Dalloway* entails language and genre studies, feminist and gender studies, historical and cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and other studies such as influence and intertextuality. Generally speaking, these studies, though sometimes overlapping, fall into three categories, namely, stylistic, socio-psychological and feminist studies.

Many critics claim that *Mrs. Dalloway*, with its masterly employed technique, stream of consciousness, is Woolf's first successful attempt to revolt against the traditional realistic novels and helps to plunge the traditional realistic novel writing into a new era--modernism. It is justified to say that *Mrs. Dalloway* poses great difficulty for its readers due to its miscellaneous, ambiguous, fragmentary and chaotic description composed of memories, moods, and sensations mingled helter-skelter. For Virginia Woolf, writing *Mrs. Dalloway* is a "tunneling process", whereas for every reader, *Mrs. Dalloway* presents a journey of discovery through the tunnel.

Woolf commented, "In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticize the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense." She also gave such a conclusion--"If they say that *Jacob's Room* is all a clever experiment, I shall produce *Mrs. Dalloway* as the finished product" (Maze, 1997: 34).

Later on, critics agreed on Woolf's great position in literature world, and interpreted *Mrs. Dalloway* from various perspectives. In the 1970s, critical reviews of *Mrs. Dalloway* were mainly introductions of the story and detailed analysis of major characters. In the 1980s, Woolfian study focused largely on the text. In the 1990s, emphasis had been shifted to social and historical dimensions in this novel. Social Darwinism was discussed in an essay published in *The Explicator* in 1998, by Amy Blake. And in 1999, Michael Lackey published an essay talking about Clarissa's and Miss Kilman's political stances. Critical opinions have varied in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In "Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*: A well of Teas", George A. Panichas discussed

social and historical aspects. Inter-textual analysis and myth-archetypal critical approaches are favored by other critics. The connection between Greek myth and *Mrs. Dalloway*, as well as Goddess figures in the novel are studied in Molly Hoff's "The Pseudo-Homeric World of Mrs. Dalloway" and Lisa Tyler's "The Loss of Roses: Mother-Daughter Myth and Relationships Between Women in *Mrs. Dalloway*". Recently, critics focus on the manuscript study of this novel, such as "A Direction of One's Own: Alienation in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Sula*" by Lorie Watkins Fulton in 2006 and "I Think I'm Falling in love with This Novel" by Norma Greco in 2006.

In this thesis, I intend to analyze the novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, from the aspect of Existentialism. Existentialism proposes that man is full of anxiety, in despair with no meaning in his life, and awareness of death, just helplessly struggling in the absurd world, until he makes decisive choice about his own future. Sartre argued, "Man makes himself" (Li Xinsheng, 1991: 108). It means that the world is absurd, and man tries making meaning in choice of himself, for which he should take all responsibility.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, which is set in the background at the after-war period, Woolf creates two main characters from different social classes: Clarissa and Septimus. The former is an upper-class housewife and the latter is a veteran who becomes mad after the First World War. Although they have never met and known each other, the two have something in common. They both suffer from existential crisis; both have strong sense of alienation and anxiety in the absurd world. Moreover, they couldn't find the consolation from others, even not from their families. It is apparent that Woolf creates two parallel figures to put the binary opposition elements like life and death, sanity and insanity, to reveal the existential crisis of them. And finally, the two protagonists make their own choices to confront the crisis, one by choosing to bravely embrace life while the other opting for committing suicide to awaken the absurd world. No matter what choices they make, they are both the existential heroes, like Sisyphus in the myth, to define the meaning of life by their own action in an absurd world.

This thesis consists of six parts. The first part is the introduction of the thesis, including the brief introduction of Virginia Woolf and the study of her, the previous studies on *Mrs. Dalloway* as well as the outline of the thesis. The second part aims to

give the general survey of Existentialism; the next one is about Woolf's existential thought and her meditation on life and death; the fourth part focuses on the Existential crisis undergone by the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which is followed by the analysis of the heroes under the existential crisis; and the last part is about the novel's narrative strategies, a design which is essentially existential. Finally, it's the conclusion of the thesis.

## **Chapter One A General Survey of Existentialism**

Existentialism is a philosophy that takes as its starting point the individual's existence. Everything that it has to say, and everything that it believes can be said of significance--about the world we inhabit, our feelings, thoughts, knowledge, ethics--stems from this central, founding ideas. Hence what sets it apart from most other philosophies is that it begins with the "individual" rather than the "universal" and so does not aim to arrive at general truths: its insistence on personal insights as the only means to real understanding entails that it makes no claims to objective knowledge. It may well be this focus on individual, subjective truths, its accessibility through literature and its reluctance to define either itself or its areas of interest in any categorical manner that continue to make Existentialism a fascinating subject. Its concerns are fundamental and immediate to oneself--who am I? What am I? What life shall I live? How shall I live? --and by "adopting" this attitude there is an inherent sense of dynamism, of process, journey, discovery, enlightenment and revelation that is felt and believed to be more important than the building of self-contained, all-encompassing systems more usual to philosophic endeavour. It is a prevailing philosophical trend of thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has great influence on literature, especially on the absurd theatre.

### **1.1 The Emergence of Existentialism**

Existentialism is a philosophy that becomes a self-conscious movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its basic concern is human existence. It is an inquiry into the conditions of man with relation to the problems created by an extreme crisis in historical and intellectual circumstances. It is a study of the predicament of human existence. It discusses man's experience, and opposes to all those movement which tend to consider man as either idea or other things. Existentialists insist that philosophy should be connected with the individual's own life and experience, and existentialism is object to abstract speculation which often neglects man's existence.

Tracing back its historical background of origin, there are two reasons: firstly, with the development of scientific technology, the conflicts between society and



Degree papers are in the "[Xiamen University Electronic Theses and Dissertations Database](#)". Full texts are available in the following ways:

1. If your library is a CALIS member libraries, please log on <http://etd.calis.edu.cn/> and submit requests online, or consult the interlibrary loan department in your library.
2. For users of non-CALIS member libraries, please mail to [etd@xmu.edu.cn](mailto:etd@xmu.edu.cn) for delivery details.

厦门大学博硕士论文摘要库